



# WHAT IS LIFE'S HAPPIEST PERIOD?



WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

Verily, what is happiness, and at what period is mankind happiest?

It is a proposition that anybody is willing to discuss, and upon which it is doubtful if any two persons have exactly the same opinion.

In the first place, what is happiness? Here is how the American Encyclopedia defines it:

**HAPPINESS.**  
1. Good luck, good fortune.  
2. The quality or state of being happy; felicity; a state in which all desires are satisfied; the pleasure or satisfaction arising from the gratification of all desires, and the enjoyment of pleasures without pain.

"Any condition may be demonstrated happy in which the amount of pleasure exceeds the amount of pain; and the degree of happiness depends upon the quantity of this excess."  
Bacon: Moral Philosophy, bk. i, ch. vi.  
**HAPPY.**

1. Prosperous, successful, in prosperous or fortunate circumstances.

"This point being settled, as far as the dictionary goes, the next question becomes, What is the happiest period in life? The dictionary does not attempt to answer that question, but nearly every poet and most of the other writers—novelists, essayists, lecturers, and some philosophers and historians—have tried it. They give such a variety of answers that it must be a very particular person who cannot find something that expresses his idea. Some of the definitions given by these writers are submitted herewith. And the following is what some St. Louis people have to say upon the subject. Some of those interviewed are well known; their names are given. Others are either not well known, or not known at all, so far as the general public is concerned; their names are not given:

Childhood has no sorrows, but then, it is soothed by no memories of out-lived sorrow.—George Eliot.—The Mill: on the Floor.

F. Louis Soldan, superintendent of St. Louis public schools, takes this view of the case, which may be regarded as a point scored in favor of childhood:

"For myself, my own age, whatever it is, whatever it has been, or whatever it may be, is the happiest. But perhaps it is not so in all cases. My observation leads me to believe that the happiest time in life is in the years between 2 and 3. Then the child has nothing to worry it. It is free to enjoy life, without being responsible, as older persons know responsibility, for the manner in which it enjoys it. I do not say that the child's enjoyment is that of ignorance, but rather that of freedom from care.

"Then there is the age when 'the young lord leaves the nest.' That, too, is a happy period of life. Care is in the minority, and happiness is in the majority. But even that happy age, I think, is not so happy as that of early childhood, just as the child is coming into the capacity to understand and enjoy."

How beautiful is youth! how bright it is:—  
With its illusions, aspirations, dreams!  
Book of beginnings, story without end;  
Each maid a heroine, each man a friend;  
In its sublime audacity of faith,  
"Be thou removed" it to the mountain;  
And with ambitious feet, secure and proud;  
Ascends the ladder leaning on the cloud;  
—Longfellow—"Morse's Salutation."

William Marion Fessenden, editor, litterateur, bon vivant and philosopher, thinks the greatest happiness comes at a later age than suggested by Professor Soldan. He says:

"Youth, by all means. Not childhood, but, say, from 15—." Well, I should put it this way: As long as a man feels young, as long as he can take pleasure in his life, in anticipation, in ambition, it is not in retrospect; there is a sort of melancholy pleasure in that, but when a man has only the past to look upon and think of, he is not at his happiest. Youth is the happy

## THE QUERY: FROM TWO VIEWPOINTS AS STATED BY A PESSIMIST.

To the Editor of The Republic.

People are given to telling of "those happy days," "down on the farm," "in childhood," "when we were boys," "when I was young" and all that. What do they mean by happiness? Is it in getting freebies on the face, cock-burns in the hair, sunburns on the back of the neck and a licking on reaching home? Is it in getting for the first time into a high collar and long trousers? Is it in falling in love, being lifted a few times and then marrying? Is it in having kids about the house, all of them to be regularly washed, dressed and spanked, and all of them to take turns in scratching the furniture, tearing the paper, yelling, squealing, falling downstairs and kicking up an infernal racket generally? Is it in having money, wanting money, getting money or losing money? Is it in throwing the best beat out of the front parlor, or in keeping quiet while the courting is going on, paying the extra gas and coal bills without a murmur, and then "ponying up" for the expenses of a swell wedding? Is it in having a new set of kids around one, after one set has been raised and married off? Is it in rheumatic bones, which make winter a terror, and in obstinate corpulence which makes summer a hades? Is it, finally, in being too old and feeble to enjoy what one has, or to try to get anything else, and in just waiting for the tormentor, Death, to step in and put a finish to the great old bull fight, in which man is the bull and "the stings and arrows of outrageous fortune" are the matadors? What is happiness, anyhow, and at what time in life does it come?

A SOREHEAD.

period; and youth lasts as long as man can love and hope and enjoy books and people, and life and music and women. And that is about all there is to it. Funny thing to interview a man on!"

The joys of marriage are the heaven on earth.  
Little paradise, great princess, the soul's quiet.  
Sins of the fathers, earthly immortality.  
—John Ford—"The Broken Heart."

George J. Tansey, business man and bridegroom, and an occasional dabbler in politics, declares matrimony has "a great deal to do with the case, and that the present is the happiest time. He says:

"The happiest time? The present, by all means. Why should I die to belong to any other period? 'Happiness consists in the way in which one takes life,' she says. 'Those who can see the funny side of things are the happiest.' They are the real philosophers. I really think the happiest period in one's life is when he or she has recovered from some real or imagined

Samuel M. Dodd, capitalist, lover of the good things of life and practitioner of the art of being cheerful, got back from a fishing trip in the Adirondacks in time to speak after this fashion:

"I am not old enough yet to speak from personal experience of the happiness that comes to man in all his ages. I haven't tried all the periods. But my opinion is that if a man takes care of himself, body and mind, the older he grows, the happier he becomes. I do not think there is any set period of happiness. I put it down that every year added to his life makes a man who lives properly just that much happier."

True happiness never entered at an eye.  
True happiness resides in things unseen.  
—Young—"Night Thoughts."

A lady who is literary and writes about books says happiness does not belong to any stated period. "Happiness consists in the way in which one takes life," she says. "Those who can see the funny side of things are the happiest." They are the real philosophers. I really think the happiest period in one's life is when he or she has recovered from some real or imagined

great sorrow, and can think and speak of it as a pretty good joke."

Without art hopes, without art fears,  
Without the home that gladdens love and  
Without the smile from partial beauty  
Oh! what were man?—A world without a  
—Campbell—"Pleasures of Hope."

A man who writes for the newspapers tried to be cynical when he was asked about the matter. "What does the poet say? Something about 'When a man's married his troubles begin,' isn't it? Therefore, all before that time is full of happiness, while all after that time is full of sorrow. But let us not speak of that. Perhaps childhood, when the mind is unformed and there is no such thing as real thought—consequently no worry, no sorrow, no hate, no love—is the happiest. After that period there come all the things that make life miserable. Maybe happiness is a sort of negative thing, after all, being the nothing that is temporarily left in one's life during the abnormal absence of unhappiness."

## HOW IT IS VIEWED BY NOTED AUTHORS.

Opinions on Happiness, Its Causes and Its Periods, as Found in Writings of Poets, Novelists and Essayists.

Ah! happy years! once more who would not be a boy!—Byron, "Child Harold."

Youth is to all the glad season of life; but often only by what it hopes, not by what it attains or what it escapes.—Carlyle, "Essays."

To be young is to be one of the immortals.—Hazlett, "Table Talk."

Could I love less, I should be happier now.—Bailey, "Festus."

What makes life dreary is a want of motive.—George Eliot, "Daniel Deronda."

From ignorance our comfort flows; The only wretched are the wise.—Prior.

The sum of all that makes a just man happy Consists in the well-choosing of his wife.—Massinger, "New Way to Pay Old Debts."

... all who joy would win Must share it—happiness was born a twin.—Byron, "Don Juan."

Domestic happiness, thou only bliss Of paradise that hast survived the fall!—Cowper, "Task."

Now happiness consists in activity; such is the constitution of our nature; it is a running stream, and not a stagnant pool.—Goethe, "The Book of Nature."

Fixed to no spot is Happiness sincere; 'Tis nowhere to be found, or everywhere.—Pope, "Essay on Man."

The sweetest joy, the wildest woe is love.—Bailey, "Festus."

We are all born for love. \* \* \* It is the principle of existence, and its only end.—Disraeli, "Sybil."

Pains of love be sweeter far Than all other pleasures are.—Dryden, "All for Love."

Love, then, hath every bliss in store; Not to know love is not to live.—Gay, "Plutus, Cupid and Time."

But there's nothing half so sweet in life As love's young dream.—Moore, "Love's Young Dream."

Oh, how cruelly sweet are the echoes that start When Memory plays an old tune on the heart.—Eliza Cook, Journal.

When time who steals our years away Shall steal our pleasures, too, The memory of the past will stay And half our joys renew.—Moore, Song.

I count myself in nothing else so happy As in a soul remembering my good friends.—Shakespeare, "Richard II."

So life's year begins and closes; Days, though shortening, still can shine; What though youth gave love and roses, Age still leaves its friends and wine.—Moore, "Spring and Autumn."

To be 70 years young is sometimes far more cheerful and hopeful than to be 40 years old.—O. W. Holmes, on the seventieth birthday of Julia Ward Howe.

Mankind are always happier for having been happy; so that if you make them happy now, you make them happy twenty years hence by the memory of it.—Sydney Smith, Lecture on "Benevolent Affections."

For it stirs the blood in an old man's heart; And makes his pulses fly, To catch the thrill of a happy voice, And the light of a pleasant eye.—N. P. Willis, "Saturday Afternoon."

## WHO IS THE HAPPIEST OF MEN? HE WHO VALUES THE MERIT OF HIS OWN, AND IN THEIR PLEASURE TAKES JOY, EVEN AS THOUGH 'TWERE HIS OWN.

—GOETHE: DISTICH.

## HERMIT LIFE OF ROSTAND, CYRANO DE BERGERAC'S AUTHOR.

The Famous Playwright's Reminiscences of His Early Dramatic Work.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.  
So nervous that he shudders at the sight of a stranger; so melancholy and suspicious that his friends pass him by; too indolent to care for his health; and too self-indulgent to listen to the calls of ambition; Edmond Rostand, author of "Cyrano de Bergerac" and a dozen other plays in verse, leads the life of an apprehensive hermit in his elegant home in Paris.

Now and then word goes out that his mind is unbalanced; that he is the hopeless victim of a progressive brain malady. Then come contradictions, scathing contradictions, that hint of deliberate misrepresentation, and declare that the poet-hermit is only tired.

With the view of setting at rest these contradictory stories your correspondent journeyed to the hermitage, in Rue Alphonse de Neuville. Rostand's welcome was almost cordial—certainly it was not formal. He said he felt more like himself than for many weeks past; and was in a pleasantly retrospective mood.

He looks older, no doubt of that, his high forehead and thin face seem higher and thinner than ever, and the inevitable cigarette burns constantly between the thin lips or nervous fingers. He has an air of tired anxiety, and the shy look of a self-centered man. He talks languidly, with only an occasional gesture or shrug of the shoulders; but he talks interestingly, and not like a man whose wits have gone astray.

First, he wanted to talk of the press; and his fancied wrongs at the hands of certain critics of international fame. He was bitter, and talked from the standpoint of an old man. To have heard, and not seen him, one would have fancied that the wall came

from an unrecognized genius of 70, rather than from a man just turned 42, with the plaudits of the world ringing in his ears, and a hundred stage directors clamoring for another play.

When he had finished his tirade, his manner became more subdued; the fire of passion died out of his sunken eyes and gave place to the dreamy look of retrospection.

"When I was quite a young man," he said, quietly, "I wrote a play in one act. It was called 'Les Pierrots.'"

"You might at an evening party, when there were many young ladies present, to amuse them, I read this little play to verse. De Bergerac, of the Comedie Francaise, was there and heard me read it, and was most enthusiastic, and said that it must be played at his theater, and asked me to give him the manuscript to lay before Claretie, the director."

"I had written for the stage before then, a trifle for the Cluny Theater called 'Le Bonheur.' I was in the world, it was in writing for the stage? The stray remark of a critic whom I do not know, whom I have never met. When, as a very young man, I published a volume of poems, 'Les Muses,' Gustave Flaubert—that is the name of the critic—reviewing it in 'La Revue Bleue,' wrote that he saw in my poems a large promise of future success in writing poetical plays for the stage. At that time, though I had always wished to write for the stage, I had never thought I had never ventured to think of writing plays in verse. It seemed to me very curi-

ous, this remark of his, and later on I remembered it.

"I have told you that De Bergerac was enthusiastic about 'Les Pierrots,' and that he took the manuscript away from me and gave it to Claretie to read. Claretie seemed very vexed when the committee announced their decision, and when he brought the verdict to his private room he said to me: 'You will lose nothing. Write another piece, and I will undertake that it shall be accepted.' Then I grew bold, and said: 'If I write another piece, it will be a play in three acts. Try to do so,' said Claretie."

"So I set to work and wrote 'Les Romanesques.' I was 22 or 23 at the time. It was a light and airy piece, proceeding from Marivaux and under the influence of De Banville, a piece of sheer badinage. I read it myself to the committee. I trembled as I entered the room. But as soon as I reached the third line I was once again completely master of myself. I forgot my public. I forgot that Got was there, and Febvre, and all the rest. I thought only of my piece, and I read on for myself alone. The play was accepted. But then came three years of waiting, during which I had no news whatever of my piece. That is to say, no good news, for I did occasionally hear of it from my friends and from actors at the Francaise, who told me that it was not a good play, and advised me to withdraw it. During the last year I was so tired of it that I gave up hoping, and decided to write another play. In the meanwhile, if I wrote little, I burned much."

"I have no method in my work, and no regularity. That depends on my state of health, and I am never very well. There are times when such neuroticism comes upon me that for weeks and months together I never leave my room. So there are long, long periods when I write nothing. When I do write it is usually in the evenings."

"While I was waiting for 'Les Romanesques' to be produced, I began to write 'La Princesse Lointaine,' a somewhat mystical and serious poem."

"After 'Les Romanesques' had been produced and proven a great success, I submitted 'La Princesse Lointaine.' Both the players and critics had put me down as a comic writer, and the serious work was not approved. The public was surprised that the play was not a merry one. Sarcy had written me as a modern

Regnard, and Regnard critics and the public wished me to remain throughout the whole of my career. The failure of 'La Princesse Lointaine' discouraged me. I felt that I have only one or two friends. I wish to be recognized at all as a playwright. I revolted against this tyranny, and I said to myself: 'I must set to work to write a religious play, and that is how 'La Samaritaine' came to be written."

"Then came the success of 'La Samaritaine.' I only allowed it to be played during Holy Week, and though the prices of seats were raised, it earned, relatively speaking, more money than even 'Cyrano' does. But what afforded me the most delight in its success was that I had shown the public and the critics, and had convinced myself that I was not forced always to write comedies."

"All this time I had been carrying Cyrano de Bergerac in my head. Ever since I was at school I had felt that there was a play to be written on the life of Cyrano de Bergerac, duelist, warrior and author. Even before 'Les Romanesques' was written I had the intention of writing a play about him. But I had no action for the piece. I thought of him always, and I felt that it was his life that I wanted to write. Bibliophile Jacob's book upon him, No-dier's eulogy, and, of course, every line of his own works, I filled my head with his heroic notes concerning him."

"Now and then I would write a few verses, a tirade or two, and put them in my drawers. So, that when I had found the plot of the action in which he was to move, I had much of the play ready. I wrote Cyrano simultaneously with 'La Samaritaine.' When I was in the midst of the piece it occurred to me that the only man in France who could play the part was Coquelin. 'Cyrano' could not be played before the Francaise, for he was not there who could act such a part, or, rather, who could look the part like Coquelin. I felt so convinced of this that I would not listen to my friend Febvre, when he urged me to give it to the Comedie Francaise, and believed that it would take with the public. I never dreamed that it would succeed. Even before it was an unheard-of thing on the stage for a play written in rhyme to run for more than 30 nights."

"Then the conversation took another turn to the purely personal. 'I rarely ever go out,' he said, 'I never take any exercise. I never go out for the mere sake of walking, only when I have a definite object in view."

I am told that I ought to take exercise, and I think that I shall begin fencing once more. I have cut my way through my wife and children suffice me for company—and I have only one or two friends. I wish to be recognized at all as a playwright. I revolted against this tyranny, and I said to myself: 'I must set to work to write a religious play, and that is how 'La Samaritaine' came to be written."

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## HENRY MEYER IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The following letter was written by Mr. Henry Meyer of this city, now in South Africa, to his father, Mr. C. F. G. Meyer: Bloemfontein, April 18.—I have had no opportunity of writing to you since leaving Cape Town to represent the cold storage company, which is the object of my mission.

From Cape Town I went in company with Mr. Tregidga, to Kimberley, which town so well resisted the siege of the Boers.

After a ten days' stay at Kimberley I was obliged to shift, with the object of reaching Bloemfontein by wagon route, but just as I was about to start off, the military sent word that the enemy had captured a large convoy from them, and that this route was no longer safe (nor has it been used again since). I was, therefore, obliged to make a long detour, packing my traps, four horses and half a ton of baggage, and going by way of De Aar, Nampop and Norval's Pont to the Orange Free State border. At Norval's Pont I unpacked my cart, and by degrees worked my way to Springfontein, and finally along the railroad to this place.

In traveling from Norval's Pont to Springfontein I had most interesting experiences, such as sleeping at night in the open veldt, with only a blanket around me, and the stary heaven as a roof. The second day of this little excursion I found that I was the very first English-speaking person who was passing through all that section, and that the entire district was, as yet, unoccupied by the English. With my heart a bit higher up and nearer by throat than it is ordinarily I, nevertheless, pushed on and finally reached a magnificent country estate. As we approached I could see through my field glasses the main body of the estate moving about rather excitedly, observing my movements through their field glasses, but as we came nearer all suddenly seemed to have disappeared, except-

ing a 19 or 22-year-old native lad, who nervously came out to the cart and offered me his hand. Seeing that we were pleasant to the lad others began to come, growing larger in size and older, and finally a well-dressed and highly intelligent lady appeared. A Mr. Grobler came out and asked me in Dutch:

"What do you wish, and where are the English soldiers?"

I told her that they were some distance off and that we did not have any soldiers with us, but were only stopping to partake of a glass of milk, if such they cared to sell. We were asked to enter and were given our milk. I commented upon the surprise I felt at finding so fine an estate so far from ordinary means of communicating with the outer world, and as they had refused to accept pay for the milk, asked whether I might know the family name of our host. The lady then told me that the name was Grobler.

I said to her: "I am an American. At the time of the World's Fair at Chicago I, with other St. Louis merchants, entertained the World's Fair Commissioners at a banquet at St. Louis. A Mr. Grobler, from the Free State was my neighbor at the table. I presume he is some relative of yours."

The lady thereupon said: "Why, that was my husband." She went into the house and brought her husband out with her, and he proved to be the very same man I had met. We talked over matters for awhile and then proceeded with our drive. Mr. Grobler was the chief commandant of all the Orange Free State forces during the early part of the war, but, owing to his horse falling and injuring his hip, he was obliged to retire to his farm.

I am now attached to Lord Roberts's command, as agent for the Cold Storage Company, and with his forces the main body of the English army, will proceed to Pretoria, which is likely to be within a week. But, of course, we will be some time in getting there. Any letters to me to Cape Town P. O. box will reach me more or less promptly.

I have been all over the country below here, either in my cart or on horseback, buying cattle and sheep.

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